

WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Representative Mike Quigley, (IL-05) along with Reps. Joe Heck (NV-03) and Steve Chabot (OH-01), introduced the Jobs Originating through Launching Travel (JOLT) Act, a bipartisan and bicameral effort to create jobs, reform outdated visa laws, and increase national security.

“Increasing international travel opportunities and updating visa travel protocol will drive tourism dollars to cities across the country, including Chicago,” **said Rep. Quigley**. “Modernizing the Visa Waiver Program specifically will strengthen our national security and enhance relationships with important allies like Poland, who have been denied visa-free travel because of an outdated regime.”

A key provision of the JOLT Act would allow for expansion of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), which allows citizens of selected countries to travel to the U.S. for 90 days without a U.S. visa. Rep. Quigley’s bill would permit entry into VWP if a country has a low visa overstay rate, set at less than three percent, and modify the requirement on refusal rate criteria.

Along with Rep. Quigley’s VWP provision, the JOLT Act includes standards for faster visa processing, expedited entry for priority visitors, a section to encourage Canadian consumption and investment in the U.S. via increased Canadian travel and a “premium processing” pilot program at the State Department. The VWP provision has the same goals as a standalone [bill that Rep. Quigley and Senator Mark Kirk \(IL\) introduced last year](#) to update and modernize VWP requirements, and which President Obama endorsed during his inaugural visit to Poland.

Modernizing the admission criteria could potentially lead to Poland’s inclusion into the VWP and would provide a more objective and standardized basis for adding additional countries in the future. Currently, Poland is the only member of the 25-country Schengen Treaty Area not able to travel to the United States under the VWP. Poland has stood with the U.S. over the past two decades on issues including deployment of troops to Afghanistan and Iraq, willingness to serve as a forward outpost for our missile defense shield, and as an ally on behalf of the trans-Atlantic partnership in European Union councils.

Expansion of the VWP would bring increased revenue to the travel industry at a time when America’s economy needs it most. Recently, the U.S. Travel Association studied the economic

impact of including the 11 likeliest candidates for VWP status: Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Croatia, Israel, Panama, Poland, Romania, Taiwan and Uruguay. Last year, three million visitors from these countries spent \$14 billion in the United States, directly supporting 104,300 jobs in the American travel industry. In the first year of participation in the VWP, the growth rate of visitation from these countries would nearly double.

A companion bill is to be introduced in the Senate later today by a bipartisan group of Senators, led by Charles E. Schumer (NY) and Barbara Mikulski (MD).

Rep. Quigley has been a staunch advocate for expanding VWP and [testified before Congress](#) in 2011 on the benefits of including Poland and other diplomatic partners. In January 2012, Congressman Quigley

[traveled to Poland](#)

to discuss ways to further enhance the U.S.-Polish partnership, including advancing the VWP legislation. Illinois' 5th Congressional District is home to more than 100,000 citizens of Polish ancestry. More than one million Poles call Chicago home, the highest concentration of any city outside of Warsaw.

For a complete section-by-section summary of the JOLT Act, please [click here](#).

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